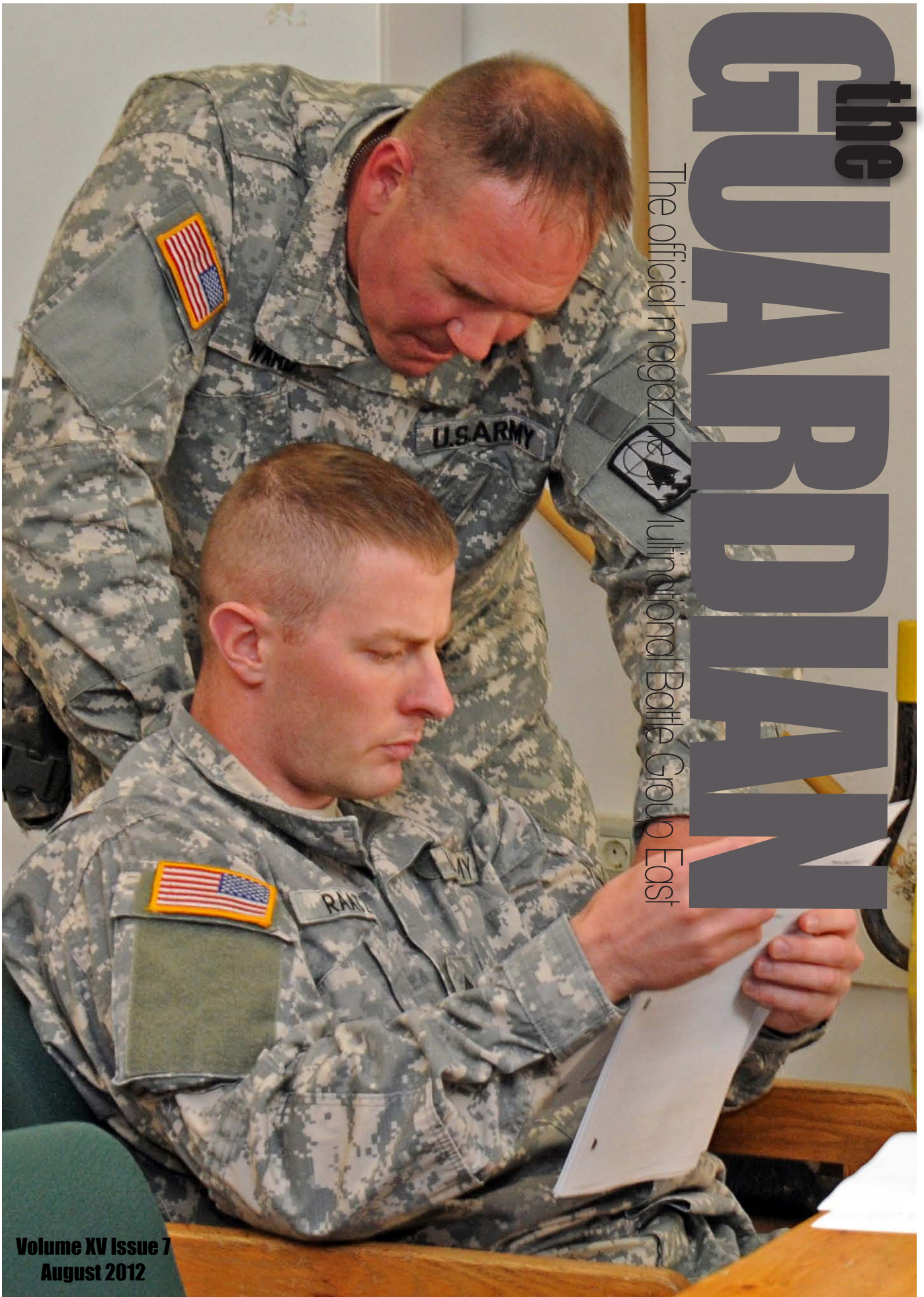


the GUARDIAN

The official magazine of the Multinational Battle Group East



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WHAT'S INSIDE



MNBG E HELPS CONTAIN RUDARE WILDFIRE
PAGE 5



VETS EYE MILITARY DOG HANDLING
PAGE 6



HONING JOB SKILLS UPON RETURN
PAGE 7 & 8



WI SOLDIERS SUPPORT BOSNIAN MISSION
PAGE 9



IMPORTANT INFO FOR RETURNING SOLDIERS
PAGE 11



WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY AT CBS
PAGE 17

the GUARDIAN

The Guardian is produced for personnel of Multinational Battle Group - East, and is an authorized publication for members of the Department of Defense.

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ABOUT THE COVER

Maj. J. Blair Ward, MNBG E staff judge advocate, goes over a résumé with Sgt. Eric Raatz during a job fair held at Camp Bondssteel recently. See more photos and story on Pages 7 & 8.

(U.S. Army photo by
Spc. Joshua Barnett)

FROM THE COMMANDER

Fight Complacency, the Enemy of Success

Our Battle Group has successfully met every challenge we've been presented with during the past eight-plus months in Kosovo. Now, in addition to what we face every day, I'm asking you to take-on one more challenge as we approach our re-deployment to the United States: fighting complacency.

The day-to-day, monotonous grind can dull our senses and give us a false sense of security, which can ultimately affect our ability to successfully complete our mission. As Soldiers and leaders, we must understand how to identify complacency, and develop ways to avoid it.

Complacency has many causes and reveals itself in many forms, but at its core, complacency can be defined as a false or inflated feeling of confidence or security that is unwarranted, because it overlooks actual shortcomings or threats. It can slip into our ranks at any time, putting our mission — and the safety of our Soldiers — at risk.

No unit or individual is immune to the subtle attacks of complacency. We must fight it at every level, and it starts at the top.

Here are some ideas of ways to keep our formations alert and ready for whatever may be in store for us during these final weeks of our mission.

Build on our success. Although the old ways work, we must always ask ourselves "Is there a better way to accomplish the mission?" Ask your colleagues for their thoughts and ideas, and use teamwork to improve our way of doing business.

Emphasize adaptability. It is important to realize that re-deployment is always a dynamic endeavor. Guidance and direction often change back and forth, at no fault of our leadership. Rather than becoming frustrated with change, we must focus on being adaptable to it.

Continue to train. A great method to fight complacency while deployed is to hone our individual skills. Training in weapons marksmanship, medical first aid, hand to hand combat, and technical commu-

nication, to name a few, will help keep our skills sharp and our units mission ready.

Stay physically fit. Don't neglect or "blow off" your physical training regimen. A strong body = a strong mind. Both will help us stay alert and focused on the mission.

Enforce standards & maintain discipline.

Leaders and Soldiers alike must exercise self-discipline and enforce compliance with standards. By looking the other way instead of setting the example we only breed complacency.

Establish high goals. Raise the bar on setting your goals. Establish smaller, supporting objectives that are achievable in the near term, and vigilant in tracking your progress. We must celebrate our successes and channel that positive energy into further improvements.

Take a break. We all need some "down time" occasionally for personal rejuvenation. Try to use your weekly "reset day" to take your mind off the mission and experience the rich cultural heritage of Kosovo. I encourage you to participate in MWR trips and/or Unit Sponsored Activities. This will do wonders for raising your spirits and energize your drive to accomplish the mission at hand.

I challenge each of you to try these methods and to think of additional ways to defeat complacency - the "Enemy of Success".

Attacking this enemy during the last weeks of our deployment may not be something we are trained to do, but it is something we must learn. Our ability to successfully complete our mission in Kosovo depends on it.



Col. Jeffrey J. Liethen
MNBG E Commander



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CSM CORNER

STAY FOCUSED, KEEP SAFETY IN MIND

Leaders at all levels are encouraged to continue to hold each other accountable for maintaining high standards of conduct and accountability.

As we enter our ninth month here in Kosovo, our thoughts are on the next chapter in our lives, but our mission here is not complete until we are on the plane headed for Indiana.

Lack of concentration and attention to detail can lead to serious consequences. Accidents, injury or a lack of good judgment can have serious outcomes.

Leaders continue to plan, and execute as we head towards our relief-in-place (RIP). A lot of moving parts are ahead of us during August as we pack and load equipment. Many of these activities are not part of our current routine; safety and accuracy need to be our watchwords. Continue to enforce the battle group commander's policies and complete our mission with pride and honor.

AHEAD OF US

August promises to be a month of continued educational opportunity. We have just completed our third Warrior Leaders Course (WLC), and now have 120 WLC graduates during the deployment, CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OF THEM!

Modern Army Combativies (MAC) level II training is in place for an additional 32 Soldiers from across the Battle Group. German weapons qualification is also planned for additional U.S. Soldiers to qualify. The Battle Group is also planning one additional MAC

Level I class prior to the end of the deployment.

These activities, coupled with loading personal and section equipment, customs and planning and executing the RIP should keep us plenty occupied. Oh yes, we still have a mission to conduct as well.

Continue to set the box for your return to Family, friends and employers. Planning with your significant other is important as they anticipate your return as much as you do. Communicate with them as it is a very emotional and significant event in all our lives when we return from our deployment.

SAFETY FIRST

Thank you for a great job to this point in our deployment. We have accomplished many things and the most challenging time is ahead in the next few weeks.

Work together as a team, communicate, and use the resources available to set the stage for a great re-integration. Think Safety while moving equipment and traveling on the roadways. Seatbelts are not an option and are to be worn at all times for your personal safety.



Command Sgt. Maj.
Bradley J. Shields
MNBG E CSM



LEFT: MNBG E Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley J. Shields, right, shakes the hand of a German soldier for qualifying on the U.S. M4 rifle. RIGHT: Sgt. 1st Class Ray Kinney, 3rd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, right, accepts the German army Schutzenchnur weapons qualification badge for qualifying on a number of German weapons systems. MNBG E Soldiers from the German and U.S. Armies shot weapons from the other member's country as part of a long-standing tradition. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jim Wagner)



THE END



A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter from Task Force Aviation drops water over a wildfire near Rudare. (Courtesy photo)

MNBG E CONTAINS RUDARE WILDFIRE

RUDARE, Kosovo - While much of the attention in the U.S. focused on fighting wildfires in Colorado, Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) Soldiers faced and helped conquer a forest fire here in Kosovo, July 2, 2012.

A forest fire north of Mitrovica — just south of the village of Rudare, recently the site of a roadblock removal operation conducted by MNBG E — cut a swath through the forest and threatened to damage residences and the Beljetin Sokolica Monastery.

U.S., Polish, Moroccan, German, French and Italian Soldiers battled the blaze from the ground while UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters from Camp Bondsteel dropped water from above to contain, and ultimately put out, the blaze.

According to officials, the first reports of a fire reached Kosovo Force (KFOR) officials at 3:30 p.m. and by 4 p.m. Soldiers deployed from Camp Novo Selo. They assessed the situation and after local Mitrovica fire fighting resources were depleted, mobilized ground troops to fight the fire around 5:30 p.m. More than 50 Soldiers from Poland and Germany, along with the FCP command element, fought to contain the blaze on the south slope while platoons from Italy and Morocco worked to contain the fire on the northern side.

Over the course of the next three hours, helicopters dumped nearly 27,000 gallons of water to contain and extinguish the wildfire in the region. Operation Fire Break, in total, took roughly four hours to complete.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Joseph Lynch, MNBG E forward command post (FCP) chief and commander of the Georgia Army National Guard's 3rd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, said the fire fighting efforts conducted by Soldiers is one example of the efforts KFOR undertakes to ensure the safety and security of all Kosovo residents.

"KFOR demonstrated its flexibility by mobilizing its forces to fight a quick-moving ground fire in the Rudare area of northern Kosovo," he said. "Many of the Soldiers involved were the same Soldiers who conducted the roadblock removal operation on June 1, demonstrating their dedication to ensure a safe and secure environment. The persistence of those involved paid off around 10:30 p.m. when the fire was effectively extinguished."

Rudare was the site of a roadblock removal operation conducted by MNBG E to ensure freedom of movement in northern Kosovo. Two KFOR Soldiers were injured by gunfire from protestors contesting the NATO force efforts.

THE END

MED EYES MILITARY DOG TRAINING

TF MED TECHNICIANS DON 'BITE SUITS' TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF CARE, ENSURE MILITARY DOGS STAY AT PEAK HEALTH

story & photos by Spc. Joshua Barnett

While everyone around Camp Bondsteel is familiar with Task Force MED's primary mission – running the hospital – some of their soldiers play another critical role. The veterinary clinic, which cares for the military working dogs, is also part of their responsibility. To learn more about that side of their mission, the hospital staff recently visited the kennel, and assisted in the dogs' training.

"I wanted TF MED to see what these dogs can do and why they are so important," said Spc. Angela Teel, an animal

care specialist with Task Force MED. "The unit knows I work with the military working dogs, but most have never actually seen them or the training they do, and why it is so important that they remain in top physical health."

Multi-National Battle Group East (MNBG E) has three working dogs and their handlers assigned to Camp Bondsteel. Their mission is to assist with explosive ordnance detection and force protection missions, said Sgt. Trent Miller, a military working dog handler and Camp Bondsteel kennel master.

In addition to familiarizing the medical Soldiers with the canines' capabilities, the event was also beneficial to the working dogs and their handlers. The handlers work together daily to train the dogs, but introducing outsiders to the scenario provided useful unpredictability.

"The dogs and handlers benefited greatly from this training because it gave both of them something new," added Spc. Angela Teel, an animal care specialist with Task Force MED. "When handlers perform the aggression training, they know each other's dogs

and how they are going to react and that can sometimes interfere with the training."

Miller agreed, "We allow our dogs to interact with different situations when encountering a bite, people react different with each bite, so it gives them a different training aspect."

"Each dog is different, so each dog presents new challenges," Miller said. "Practice makes perfect. Every day we have to do this just to keep them fresh."

THE END



Sgt. Trent Miller, a military working dog handler and the Camp Bondsteel kennel master, and his dog Meko act through a scenario during a bite training exercise.



Chap. (Capt.) Joseph Ledger, Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection manager, teaches a résumé and interview workshop at Camp Bondsteel, June 14, 2012. The workshop, held June 11-15, provided 189 soldiers from Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) with the skills and tools necessary to find a job after their deployment.

HONING JOB SKILLS FOR RETURN HOME

story & photos by Spc. Joshua Barnett

Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) recently provided nearly 200 deployed Soldiers with valuable training to help them secure civilian employment once their deployment ends. The program, held June 11-15, 2012, included a résumé-writing workshop and practice job interviews.

“My goal is to provide all Soldiers assigned to MNBG E the best opportunity possible for employment options by the time they arrive at the demobilization station,” said Sgt. Maj. Robert Burgette, MNBG E operations sergeant major. “I don’t think we’ve accomplished this yet, but we are well on our way. Soldiers looking for employment assistance now have a solid résumé as well as some experience in selling their skills to employers through the mock interviews.”

That included teaching Soldiers how to describe their military skills in ways that civilian employers will understand and value; part of that means leaving out slang and jargon that becomes second nature for service members.

During the résumé workshop, each soldier was given a template to craft their own résumé. Advisors were standing by, ready to offer assistance.

“If this was done at the demobilization station or reintegration, we feel it’s too late,” said Chap. (Capt.) Joseph Ledger, manager of the Wisconsin Employ-

ment Resource Connection (WERC). “They need to start thinking about what they’re going to do when they get home now, so they can go home to a job and not to unemployment, to better their family life.”

The Wisconsin Employment Resource Connection (WERC) helps Soldiers and their families obtain a skill trade or occupational license, further educational goals and find and sustain jobs. WERC bridges the gap between qualified service members, their spouses and quality employers. Their stated goal is to “become the central hub for employment resources for the Wisconsin National Guard, ultimately reducing the unemployment rate among service members and families.”

After creating a résumé, each Soldier then participated in a mock job interview. The interviews consisted of questions tailored to the type of position the Soldier expressed interest in.

“Each Soldier left with a résumé, and left with the confidence and skills needed to be more successful when conducting job interviews when they get home,” said Sgt. 1st Class Benjamin Jarvis, the battle group’s training NCO.

“I already knew I had confidence, but this gave me a little bit more confidence about my confidence,” said Spc. Anthony Tigner, a cavalry scout with the Georgia Army National Guard’s 3rd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment. It taught him to, “be prepared,

story continued on next Page

just knowing the company that I'm applying for, knowing the personnel, and just knowing what answers to give and how to add a little bit more detail to those answers," he said.

The Soldiers' résumés will be forwarded to the Department of Work Force Development Offices at the Veterans Affairs Center in each Soldier's respective state, said Burgette.

The Veterans Affairs officers will use the résumés to solicit federal, state and local employment opportunities on behalf of the Soldiers.

"The Army National Guard and Reserve Soldier has a special quality that the rest of the Soldiers in the Army don't have," said Burgette. "You've developed a unique set of skills and experience from your professional civilian occupation, which you bring with you every time you put the uniform on.

"This makes us a much more flexible force, able

to adapt and succeed where others can't," he added. "You also bring a valuable resource to your employer that few others can. You've developed professionalism, leadership and a sense of duty that only those who wear the uniform will ever understand. So don't

ever quit doing what you are doing. The Soldiers of the Army National Guard and Army Reserve are a key component to the life's blood of our Nation."

"Coming here, working one-on-one with them with this volunteer staff from Bondsteel has been amazing; I think truly, we have affected some lives through the process," said Ledger.

The next phase of the continuing effort to help

soldiers find civilian employment was a job fair held at Camp Bondsteel, July 10-13. Information on various government agencies, military contractors and civilian companies were made available to deployed Soldiers to help them find employment when they return home.



Mark Sier, training and development specialist for the Job Connection Employment Program (JCEP), coaches Spc. Andrew Plummer, a medic with 3rd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, Georgia Army National Guard, during a résumé and interview workshop.

THE END

MOROCCAN, U.S. COYS PARTICIPATE IN CRC TRAINING

Members of 3rd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, Georgia Army National Guard, conduct crowd and riot control (CRC) training with members of the Moroccan army, June 27, 2012, at Camp Nothing Hill, Kosovo. In addition to conducting routine vehicle patrols and other operations that ensure a safe and secure environment, along with freedom of movement, members of Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) train together to maximize working together as a group. (U.S. Army photos by Spc. Leland White)



WI SOLDIERS SUPPORT BOSNIAN MISSION

story & photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jim Wagner

While the majority of Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade deployed to Kosovo to support NATO peacekeeping efforts, a smaller contingent found themselves in another Balkan state entirely.

Last year, as approximately 300 Wisconsin Guard Soldiers mobilized to support the Kosovo Force (KFOR) mission at Camp Bondsteel, five Badger State Soldiers found themselves flying to Camp Butmir in Sarajevo, Bosnia- Herzegovina.

The five took over positions supporting NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo (NHQSA) and its European Union Force (EUFOR), the international peacekeeping effort that began in 2005 when active peace enforcement operations as part of the Stabilization Force (SFOR) ended in the region.

NHQSA has three primary missions: advise the Bosnia government on defense reforms in order to integrate with the European Union (EU), oversee Camp Butmir and oversee NATO personnel in Sarajevo.

According to Lt. Col. Michael Smith, U.S. Balkans National Support Element (NSE) commander, the Wisconsin Soldiers at Camp Butmir support all U.S. personnel to include Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps.

"As European Command's only direct reporting unit in the Balkans area of responsibility, the NSE protects and executes U.S. interests on behalf of the geographic combatant commander," he said.

In addition to sharing the same geographical area — the Balkan Peninsula — the missions in Kosovo and Bosnia share many similarities. NATO peacekeeping forces in both regions are there to prevent further bloodshed from happening in the wake of

ethnic cleansing campaigns in the 1990s, while implementing measures to ensure subsequent flare ups don't occur in the region.

Only in the details are the mission requirements different. KFOR's primary responsibilities include actively providing a safe and secure environment and freedom of movement; EUFOR's mission is to oversee the military implementation of the 1995 Dayton Agreement, which ended the war between Muslim Bosniaks, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.

Pfc. Koty Slough from Oconto, Wis., a postal clerk who works in the National Support Element (NSE) at Camp Butmir, said the people of Sarajevo and surrounding communities find the NATO presence here crucial to their country's long-term well-being.

"Our military presence in Bosnia leaves the people with a feeling of security and comfort, knowing that if they needed help we would be able to assist," he said.

Slough is one of several Wisconsin Soldiers working in the NSE, supporting U.S. forces stationed at Camp Butmir. In addition to postal service, they provide logistics and personnel support during their year-long deployment.

Soldiers from more than 20 countries are deployed to Camp Butmir, and like the many challenges posed at Camp Bondsteel, where Wisconsin Soldiers in Kosovo are headquartered with Multinational Battle Group East, language differences are one of the biggest obstacles to properly executing a mission.

Capt. Jay Wilson from Helenville, Wis., logistics chief at NHQSA, has been on several deployments around the world, including Iraq and Afghanistan. Deployed Soldiers work extensively with their sister service counterparts, like the Navy and Air Force, to accomplish a mission.

Working at a NATO headquarters, however introduces another level of joint service when it's in a coalition environment. With more than 20 nations



Pfc. Koty Slough, left, and Staff Sgt. Marvin Hannah, participate in a flag retirement ceremony to properly retire the American flag by cutting out the Union stars recently at Camp Butmir, Bosnia. Six members of the Wisconsin Army National Guard are deployed to Bosnia on a year-long deployment supporting NATO peacekeeping efforts.

story continued on next Page

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from around the world involved, finding a common language can be difficult. Fortunately for Americans, English is the predominant language spoken around the world, though individual skill levels in the language vary wildly from Soldier to Soldier at NATO.

"I find a lot of the people come here not knowing a lot of English; it takes time for them to get use to speaking it," Wilson said. "There are some misunderstandings before they get used to it."

Language barriers aside, NHQSA Soldiers find common ground with projects over and above their mandated mission that help the people of Bosnia. Many take the time to work on projects that better assist the country assimilate into the European Union, whether it's visiting an international elementary school or raising money for disabled people.

"Several people have come up to me and said, 'hey, thank you for being here, it means a lot to our people,'" Slough said. "A friend told me once, whether good or bad, you will leave this city a different person. Cliche or not, I know now that is true and only in a positive way, for me and for those I have come to know."

For the Soldiers of the 157th MEB, whether they went to Kosovo or Bosnia, that's a sentiment likely true in both regions.



Staff Sgt. Tameka Thomas, National Support Element (NSE) non-commissioned officer-in-charge, a Chicago resident and member of the Wisconsin Army National Guard's 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, conducts an operational briefing at Camp Butmir.

BOSNIANS SCRIMMAGE SOLDIERS TO SAY 'THANK YOU' FOR YOUTH CAMP

story & photos by Spc. Joshua Barnett

U.S. military personnel visited a Bosnian youth basketball camp to play some 3-on-3 hoops with the coaches. The Servicemembers, assigned to NATO Headquarters Sarajevo (NHQ Sa), were invited to visit the camp as thanks for their organization's support.

"These were friendly games, NATO helped us to open this camp, they gave us a financial donation to bring ten children here for free," explained Amar Colna, team manager for Kosar-kaski Kamp na Bjelasnici.

The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen took turns playing against the camp staff, losing badly every time.

"It was good to meet people in an athletic setting, where we can have some fun together," said Pfc. Koty Slough, a postal clerk from the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade assigned to the Balkans National Support Element (NSE). "One of the best experiences here in Bosnia has been just meeting the people and getting to know them."

Command Sgt. Maj. Tim Bushee, NSE command sergeant major, explained that NATO's contribution to the camp, and their visit, serves the overall mission in Bosnia.

"It shows them that American soldiers are willing to come out and actually spend time with them to see how they live, as well as just let them see what the American people are all about," Bushee said. "All of us being Citizen-Soldiers, we are the American people; were a microcosm of American society."

The camp's goals are two-fold; "We teach the children how to feed their confidence as well as trying to teach them the skills to be professional basketball players," said Colna.

After the games were over, the NATO troops were invited to sit down with the camp staff for a hearty dinner.

"It was a good time to get out and enjoy being in the beautiful Bosnian countryside," said Bushee. "They're great hosts."



U.S. Army Pfc. Koty Slough takes a shot during a friendly 3-on-3 hoops game against the coaches at a local youth basketball camp near Sarajevo, June 29, 2012.

THE END

THE END

LEGAL CORNER

END OF DEPLOYMENT TIPS FOR SOLDIERS

I thought it would be prudent to compile a list of important matters and remind personnel of important legal protections that every servicemember should be aware of prior to returning home.

Filing Your 2011 Income Taxes

Due to the fact that you were deployed to a combat zone, you automatically obtained at least a 180-day extension. If you have not already filed your 2011 taxes, I would recommend that you do so no later than April 15, 2013. When filing your taxes be sure to annotate on the top of your tax return "Combat Zone-Kosovo." In addition, include a copy of your orders with your return.

If you would like to file your taxes before you leave Kosovo, please schedule an appointment with Mr. Sasha Sokolovski in NIPR Outlook email or at DSN x5087.

Your Reemployment Rights and Obligations

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) provides three types of protections to servicemembers.

First, the USERRA prohibits employers from discriminating against a person who is a member of the military. Second, the USERRA requires employers to promptly reemploy returning servicemembers. Third, the USERRA preserves employment benefits so that the absence from employment does not adversely affect the servicemember's level or scope of benefits.

Reporting Back to Work Requirements:

In order to qualify for many of the protections that the USERRA has to offer, servicemembers are required to perform certain acts. Specifically, with regard to reemployment, one of the most important acts is to timely report back to work and/or to submit an application for reemployment with your employer.

An application for reemployment should basically be a letter to the employer which states that you are returning from military duty and request to return to work. The application should also include the requested return date and the servicemember's contact information.

When submitting an application for reemployment, I would highly recommend that notification to

the employer be done in writing as to eliminate any doubt as to whether it was made.

If the military duty is 29 days or less, a servicemember must report to work for their next scheduled shift after safe travel to his/her home and 8 hours of rest.

If the military duty is 30 days up to 181 days, a servicemember is required to submit an application for reemployment within 14 days of being released from duty. See your DD Form 214 for your "Separation Date This Period."

If the military duty is more than 181 days, a servicemember is required to submit an application for employment within 90 days of being released from duty. See your DD Form 214 for your "Separation Date This Period."

Please note that a servicemember who fails to report back to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner does not automatically forfeit USERRA protections. Instead, the employer's policy regarding unexcused absences governs.

Prompt Reemployment:

The USERRA requires employers to promptly reemploy returning servicemembers. Although "prompt employment" is generally defined under the USERRA as soon as practical under the circumstances of each case, absent unusual circumstances reemployment must occur within 2 weeks of the servicemember's application for reemployment.

For military deployment greater than 90 days, the employee is generally entitled to placement in the position that he or she would have obtained if the servicemember had not been called into military service. This is commonly referred to as the "escalator position."

The basic premise is that the servicemember stays on the escalator even while performing military duty and moves up the escalator just like all of the other employees not taking a leave of absence. If



Capt. Al Rohmeyer
Legal Assistance
Judge Advocate

story continued on next Page

the servicemember is not qualified for and not able to become qualified for the escalator position after being given a reasonable opportunity, the servicemember is entitled to a position of like seniority, status, and pay. If not qualified or unable to become qualified for those positions after being given a reasonable opportunity, the servicemember must be placed in their pre-military service position of employment or in a position of like seniority, status, and pay.

Employer Defenses:

There are three defenses to the reemployment of a returning servicemember. For all three defenses, the employer has the burden of proof. The most common of these defenses is generally referred to as the "impossibility defense." Basically, the employer argues that the employer's circumstances have changed so much as to make reemployment impossible or unreasonable. An employer who has financial troubles and is forced to lay off employees may be able to assert such a defense.

The second defense only comes into play if the servicemember has suffered a service-related disability. The basic premise of this defense is that reemployment would cause an undue hardship in qualifying or accommodating the servicemember's service related injury.

The third defense that an employer may assert is that the employment from which the servicemember left was for a "brief, nonrecurrent period" and that such employment was not reasonably expected to continue indefinitely or for a significant period after the servicemember left for deployment. With regard to this defense, courts have found that the claim that the employment was temporary, part-time, probationary, or seasonal is not, in and of itself, enough to assert the defense.

Preservation of Employment Benefits:

The USERRA ensures that returning servicemembers get the seniority, rights, and benefits that they would have received with reasonable certainty if they had not taken time from employment to serve in the military. Examples of the benefits that are protected under the USERRA are health insurance, pension plans, vacation time, and rate of pay.

Assuming the servicemember did not elect to continue health insurance coverage while deployed, reinstatement of health insurance coverage must take place upon reemployment. Exclusions or waiting periods are prohibited unless they would have been imposed under the health plan for reasons other than termination due to military service.

With regard to pension benefits, the returning servicemember is treated as not having a break in employment for purposes of participation, vesting, and accrual of pension benefits.

Furthermore, while performing military service, an employee has full discretion to use vacation, annual, or similar types of leave with pay that they may have accrued before deploying. In addition, employers who award vacation time based upon length of employment must count any leave of absence due to military service as continuous employment.

Rate of pay must be determined by taking into account any pay increase, differentials, step increases, merit increases, or periodic increases that the returning servicemember would have attained with reasonable certainty had the servicemember remained continuously employed during the period of military service.

Who Can Help If You have Employer Related Issues:

If you have employer related issues, there are several entities that can assist you. First, I would try to resolve it one-on-one with your employer. If that doesn't work, I would then encourage you to speak to your local Staff Judge Advocate or Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) representative. ESGR has local field agents throughout the United States that will likely be able to assist you (visit www.esgr.org for more information). A third option is to contact the U.S. Department of Labor to file a complaint (visit www.dol.gov for more information).

Servicemembers' Civil Relief Act Provisions

Protection Against Default Judgments:

Section 521 of the SCRA requires a court to reopen a default judgment entered either while the servicemember was deployed or within 60 days of returning from active duty. In order to obtain these protections, a servicemember must apply for relief within 90 days of release from active duty. In the written request to reopen a default judgment, the servicemember must explain how he/she was materially affected by the deployment. In addition, the servicemember must also present a meritorious defense.

Stay of Proceedings:

Section 522 of the SCRA requires a court to stay a civil (not criminal) proceeding for at least 90 days if the servicemember is deployed or is within 90 days of returning from active duty. In order to obtain these protections, a servicemember must apply for

relief within 90 days of release from active duty. In the request to stay the civil proceedings, the servicemember must explain how he/she was materially affected by the deployment and why he/she is unable to appear.

With regard to foreclosure of a home, the 90-day minimum stay period is extended to 9 months in accordance with the Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act of 2010.

Statute of Limitations:

State and federal laws prescribe time limits for which a suit can be brought. If a suit is not brought within these times limits, the court will likely dismiss the suit upon motion of opposing party. While deployed, the statute of limitations is tolled, that is, the clock is not running. This provision can work for or against a servicemember depending on whether the servicemember is the plaintiff or the defendant.

Maximum Rate of Interest:

Section 527 of the SCRA limits the amount of interest that a creditor can charge on pre-deployment debts. The rate is capped at 6%. In order to obtain the interest rate reduction, a servicemember must submit a written request within 180 days after release from active duty. A copy of your deployment orders must accompany your request.

Please note that although creditors must reduce the interest rate upon your written request, a court could grant the creditor relief from the interest rate cap if the court determines that the servicemember was not materially affected by the deployment. Basically, if your income (which includes base pay and all allowances) was higher during the deployment than prior to the deployment, the creditor could be granted relief from complying with this provision of the SCRA.

Protection from Foreclosure:

See the Stay of Proceedings section found above.

Estate Planning

If you had any significant change in circumstances during the deployment (birth of child, death in the family, etc.), now would be a great time to consult with the legal assistance attorney to determine if your estate planning documents (e.g. Your Last Will and Testament) still meet your needs. Hiring a private attorney to draft these documents will cost you hundreds of dollars. If you get the documents drafted now, not only will you save hundreds of dollars, but your family will be better protected.

If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity, please schedule an appointment with SSG Amy Sydow via NIPR Outlook email or by phone at DSN x4575.

Military Legal Assistance Programs

If you run into an issue that requires legal counsel or simply legal advice, please keep in mind that your State's Bar Association may be able to help. Many of the State Bar Associations, to include Wisconsin, Georgia, Wyoming, New Jersey, and North Dakota, have programs to assist recently deployed servicemembers with their legal needs. Oftentimes, a servicemember will be referred to a civilian lawyer at a reduced rate or, in some cases, at no cost at all. Please refer to your State Bar Association's website for more information.

Of course, as a servicemember, you can always seek legal assistance from you local Staff Judge Advocate and/or your Legal Assistance Judge Advocate. If you have any questions regarding the contents of this article, please do not hesitate to ask.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me via NIPR Outlook email or at DSN x3209.

THE END



Attendees of a Kosovo Force (KFOR) engineering conference tour a bridge that is being constructed as part of a new four-lane highway between Pristina, Kosovo and Tirana, Albania. The conference was attended by the chief engineers of various KFOR camps and units, June 22, 2012. It consisted of briefings and presentations at Camp Prizren, followed by a four-hour tour of the highway construction site. The highway is scheduled to be completed within three years at a cost of 800 million Euro. The project currently employs more than 2,700 workers, approximately 70% of which are Kosovars. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Joshua Barnett)

SAFETY ROUNDUP

TIPS FOR SAFE SUMMERTIME SPORTS

The sun is shining, the birds are singing and the temperatures are just right as you step outside. You can't wait to get your favorites sporting activity. You have your own reasons why you participate in sports.

Maybe it's a game that you grew up playing and enjoy doing it for fun. It could be that Soldiers you work with invited you to participate and you join in for the fun and camaraderie.

Or it could be that you are a competitive person and look for to opportunities to demonstrate your abilities.

The sports you participate in are as varied as the background that members of Kosovo Force (KFOR) come from. It could be basketball, volleyball, softball, soccer, football or some other sport. While all of these activities can be fun and build team cohesion they all have their own risks.



Soldiers from Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) play a game of volleyball, July 4, 2012. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jim Wagner)

Regardless of what sport you participate in there are some things you can do to participate safely. A number of KFOR Soldiers have already been injured playing sports. I will outline some tips you can use to make your sporting activities both safe and enjoyable and avoid more injuries.

Know your limits

Each of us have limitations on what we can do in any given sport. You may be gifted at basketball, but an average player on the volleyball court. Know your limits and don't exceed them. If it is something you haven't done for years or don't participate regularly then take it slow at first until you are more comfortable with the game.

Know the rules

Know the rules of the game you are playing and follow them. Use the same rules for your recreational games that are applied to MWR-sponsored events. There are specific rules in place to keep the games safe and avoid unnecessary injuries. While you practice and play remember to use proper technique to avoid getting your body into a bad position where injuries are more likely to occur.



Maj. Peter Kitzhaber
Safety Officer

Stretch out properly

One of the biggest causes of sports related injuries is a lack of stretching prior to participation. Those of us who aren't as young as we used to be (and you know who you are) can't do quite the same things as we did when we were 18 or 21 years old. Take the time to stretch yourself out and go through some normal motions of the game before participating at full speed. And don't forget to do some cool-down stretching after you've completed your game.

Don't take it too seriously

It will be easy to get hurt if you're too competitive. Never forget the reasons you are participating, whether it is to have fun, to build camaraderie, or other. None of you participate with the goal of getting injured. While losing your game may bruise your pride, taking it too seriously is not worth breaking a bone.

Keep hydrated and watch the weather

Drink plenty of water before, during and after playing. If you feel thirsty then you are already dehydrated. Heat injuries are possible with higher temperatures and outside activity. And don't forget to use sunscreen to protect your skin as well.

Participating in sports is a great way to get out, enjoy the weather, keep active and build team cohesion. Plan your activities wisely and take the precautions listed above to keep your activity fun and safe.

THE END

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

FORGIVE OTHERS, YOURSELF

Have you ever been in a relationship and something happened that resulted in you causing the other party hurt and pain? You apologize, and though they are hurting, they say that they accept your apology. You all try to move on from that place of pain, but then every time you turn around they are reminding you about "the time you hurt them."

Or perhaps they just act differently towards you because their mouth said they forgave you, but their heart just hadn't grabbed hold of the forgiveness yet. So you find yourself in this constant battle to prove that you are really sorry.

Fortunately for us, we serve a forgiving and gracious God who really means it when He forgives us. He isn't keeping score, and He won't keep throwing your past sin back in your face. Even when we don't deserve His forgiveness, He forgives us.

So you can rest assured that when you finally come to the place of true repentance and tell God that you are sorry about what every sin you find yourself constantly repeating, He will really forgive you.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. John 1:9

The problem typically arises in that we don't take the time to forgive ourselves, part of which comes from not believing that we are really forgiven. God isn't condemning us, but we continue to put ourselves in a state of condemnation which gives the enemy leverage in our lives.

Although God doesn't throw our past up in our face, the devil will. Every chance he gets, he will remind us of our past sins and try to convince us that we are worthless, dirty, and full of sin. We have to remember that his assignment is to steal, kill and destroy. He wants to steal your joy, kill your spirit, and destroy your self-worth. The longer you walk around tripping on yourself because of your past sins and not accepting the redemption that you have in God, the longer you expose yourself to his attacks.

So ask yourself, what are some of the things that the devil keeps bringing to the forefront of my mind,

which keeps me in bondage, although God has already forgiven me? What names do I continue to incorrectly answer to? Liar? Fornicator? Cheater?

However, it's important to note that many times, it's not even the devil throwing things in our face - it's us. We beat ourselves up by dwelling on the past. We become our own worst enemy, constantly reminding ourselves of who we once were. We remain in bondage to our sins simply because we can't forgive ourselves.



Chap. (Capt.)
Andy Shepherd
MNBG E Chaplain

"You can't change the past, but you can keep the past from dictating your future."

God forgave us and set us free, yet we can't walk in that freedom. By not forgiving ourselves, we become like a prisoner being released from jail, but who doesn't move from his jail cell because he keeps rehearsing his crime in his head. The jail cell door is wide open, and he has been issued his release papers, but he just stays there stuck because he can't forgive himself.

Sounds silly, right? But we do it to ourselves all the time.

Forgiveness means to pardon, to spare someone of the burden of their offense. So when God has forgiven you, you no longer have to walk around carrying the burden or weight of your sin.

Jesus took our sins upon Himself when he died on the cross, which made it possible for God to forgive us. We try to look at God's forgiveness the way humans forgive, but God's ability to forgive is much greater than ours.

No one can take that forgiveness away from you, so accept God's forgiveness and then forgive yourself. LET IT GO.

You can't change the past, but you can keep the past from dictating your future. Until you are able to fully embrace God's forgiveness and forgive yourself, you won't be able to walk in total victory.

THE END



Derek Smith, a Blackhawk helicopter repairer with Task Force Aviation, stretches to catch a ball at first base, June 14, 2012.

SOFTBALL AT CAMP BONDSTEEL WRAPS UP



ABOVE: Michael Sallinen, Joint Visitors Bureau NCO-IC, swings at a pitch during a game between the Effin A's and TF MED Scalpels, June 18, 2012.

RIGHT: Thomas Calarco, Task Force MED first sergeant, throws a pitch during a game, June 18, 2012.

Thirteen teams from Multinational Battle Group East (MNBG E) have squared off since the beginning of June in league play that just wrapped up the past week. Next up is a championship tournament this month to determine bragging rights.

The season consisted of approximately 80 league games, during which each of the league teams played every other team at least once. The teams also regularly played scrimmages as often as possible. These unofficial games included two additional teams from other KFOR camps as their schedule allowed.

"This is a really enjoyable league. It lets soldiers forget about work for a little bit and it helps pass the time," said 1st Lt. Paul Nadolski, Headquarters & Headquarters Company, 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade's executive officer. "Anything that brings Soldiers together to do something productive is always a good thing so let's play some softball."



THE END

Photos by Army Spc. Joshua Barnett

CBS HONORS WOMEN'S EQUALITY DAY

August Showtimes in MOHH		
Sun, 19th	Mon, 20th	Tue, 21st
 1900	 1800	 2000
Wed, 22nd	Thu, 23rd	Fri, 24th
 1900	 1800	0730-0830 Discussions 1700-1800



Suffragettes celebrating passage of the 19th Amendment, Aug. 31, 1920. Photo courtesy Beitmann/CORBIS



Task Force Falcon Headquarters, Headquarters Company, is hosting Women's Equality Day, the Department of Defense (DOD) August observance.

Women's Equality Day is Aug. 26. This day commemorates the day the 19th Amendment took effect in 1920. This Amendment granted women the right to vote, which is also known as suffrage.

Events take place Aug. 19-24 in the Medal of Honor Hall. A number of events will take place during the week, from movies to an open discussion opportunities Aug. 24 on women's suffrage and equality. Lastly, there is a history and entertainment quiz that ties the week's events together.

Women's suffrage has a long and daunting road. The first Women's Rights convention took place in 1848. It took them 30 years (1878) for the 19th Amendment to be introduced to Congress. Another 41 years passed before both houses of Congress finally passed the 19th Amendment. On June 4, 1919 the Amendment went to the states for ratification. Ratification requires 75 percent of the states to complete the ratification process. It took over a year, August 18, 1920, for Tennessee to become the 36th state to ratify this Amendment, and finally pass it as law.

The quiz (TBP), historical information, and event details are available on the NIPR portal under EO, Observances & Events, Women's Equality Day.

For more information, contact HHC Equal Opportunity Leaders Master Sgt. Aaron Cherney via NIPR Outlook email, DSN x6355 or 1st Lt. Emily Yttri via NIPR Outlook email, DSN x5339.



Sgt. 1st Class Anthony White, Task Force MED operations NCO, demonstrates the functions of a defibrillator machine for the staff at the Family Medical Center in Obilic, Kosovo, June 11, 2012.

story & photos by Spc. Joshua Barnett

Kosovo Force (KFOR) personnel assigned to Task Force MED provided life-saving defibrillator training to the staff of a nearby clinic in Obilic, Kosovo, June 11, 2012.

The training session was arranged by Joint Regional Detachment East's Liaison Monitoring Team.

"Until we provided this essential training, the physicians did not have a means of providing cardiac defibrillation – essentially "kick starting" the heart – during cardiorespiratory arrest," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony White, Task Force MED operations NCO.

According to the American Heart Association, defibrillation is a process in which an electronic device gives an electric shock to the heart. This helps reestablish normal contraction rhythms in a heart having dangerous arrhythmia or in cardiac arrest.

"The Family Medicine Center has an emergency room that is open 24 hrs; we treat emergency cases within our possibilities; therefore we need training and equipment," said Nedih Shehu, an emergency room doctor at the Family Medicine Center in Obilic. "We are grateful to them, and I hope we will continue the cooperation," Shehu

added. "We need help, and I hope that with their help things will get better."

The AHA says that, "It's essential to integrate early defibrillation into an effective emergency cardiovascular care system. This means employing the five-part "chain of survival" concept."

- Immediate recognition of cardiac arrest and activation of the emergency response system — quickly calling the Emergency Medical Services (9-1-1) system.

- Early cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) with an emphasis on chest compressions — promptly giving cardiopulmonary resuscitation when needed. Order a CPR Anytime Kit.

- Rapid defibrillation — having proper equipment and being trained to use it when indicated.

- Effective advanced life support – including airway management, ventilation support, and treatment of rhythm disorders.

- Integrated post-cardiac arrest care – a comprehensive, structured, integrated, multidisciplinary system of care should be implemented in a consistent manner.

"TF MED thoroughly enjoyed being able to provide critical cardiac lifesaving training to the local Obilic clinic," said White.

THE END



ABOVE: Soldiers were treated to a fireworks display during July 4th festivities. BELOW: A double waterfall graces the scenery found at Murisha Falls, one of several locations throughout Kosovo MNBG E Soldiers can visit through Camp Bondssteel's Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) program. (U.S. Army photos by Spc. Joshua Barnett)

